

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY EA/PRCM:OVARSTRONG

APPROVED BY EA:ROBERT MILLER

S/S-O:LRMACFARLANE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040664

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 40664 ACTION SECSTATE INFO PEKING

20 FEB 76

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040664 TOSEC 040119

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (NIXON, RICHARD M.) CH US

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM: NIXON TRAVEL PLANS

REF: STATE 039737 (TOSEC 40083)

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM EA - ROBERT MILLER, ACTING

1. UNFORTUNATELY THE QUESTION OF TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON HAS TAKEN A NASTY TURN BECAUSE OF PRC INSISTENCE THAT PLANE GO TO LOS ANGELES AS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED.

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2. THIS MORNING, SHEN JO-YUN OF PRCLO CONTACTED GLEYSTEN

AND SOLOMON BY PHONE WITH IDENTICAL MESSAGE. GIST WAS THAT PRC WAS PROVIDING PLANE BECAUSE OF MR. NIXON'S HEALTH AND SINCE US SIDE HAD STATED VISIT WAS IN ACCORD WITH US-PRC RELATIONS AND HAD AGREED TO PROVIDE NECESSARY COURTESIES AND SECURITY, PLANE WOULD GO TO LOS ANGELES AS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO PICK UP FORMER PRESIDENT'S PARTY. (SCHEDULED ARRIVAL WAS 0600 PACIFIC TIME FRIDAY MORNING, DEPARTING AT 0900.)

3. SCOWCROFT THEN CONTACTED COL. BRENNAN AT SAN CLEMENTE, URGING HIM TO MAKE SURE THAT PRCLO UNDERSTOOD THAT MR. NIXON WISHED TO FLY COMMERCIALY TO TOKYO AND BOARD THE CHINESE AIRCRAFT THERE. BRENNAN AGREED TO DO SO.

4. AT REQUEST OF SCOWCROFT AND AFTER BRIEFING ACTING SECRETARY, GLEYSTEN REQUESTED SHEN JO-YUN TO COME IN FOR A DISCUSSION ON BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM. SHEN DELAYED RESPONSE UNTIL MID-AFTERNOON AND CAME IN AT 3:30.

5. WE OUTLINED TO SHEN HOW OUR HYPOTHETICAL CONCERN ABOUT THE RISK OF ATTACHMENT HAD BECOME ACTUAL AS RESULT OF A SPECIFIC THREAT TO ATTACH THE PLANE COMING FOR MR. NIXON. WE EXPLAINED THAT THE WHITE HOUSE HAD ALERTED FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON TO THE PROBLEM, AND THAT MR. NIXON HAD MADE THE DECISION TO GO TO TOKYO AND BOARD THE CHINESE PLANE THERE. WE ADDED THAT IF THE CHINESE AND MR. NIXON WERE TO DECIDE TO COME TO LOS ANGELES ANYWAY, THE US SIDE WOULD AFFORD ALL APPROPRIATE COURTESIES, CONVENIENCES, AND SECURITY. NEVERTHELESS, THERE WOULD BE NO LEGAL WAY TO PREVENT THE INITIAL ATTACHMENT, THOUGH WE COULD AND WOULD INTERVENE SUBSEQUENTLY IN COURT TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF THE AIRCRAFT, AND WERE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE RELEASED. WE COULD NOT PREDICT, HOWEVER, HOW LONG THE COURT PROCESS WOULD TAKE.

SHEN RESPONDED THAT THE PRC POSITION ON ATTACHMENT WAS WELL KNOWN, AND THAT IT WAS "TOTALLY UNREASONABLE" FOR THE US TO TRY TO PREVENT THE CHINESE FLIGHT FROM COMING TO

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THE US ON THIS "PRETEXT." SHE NOTED THAT MANY SPECIAL US FLIGHTS HAD GONE TO THE PRC, AND HAD ALWAYS RECEIVED FULL COURTESIES AND ASSISTANCE. SHE SAID, "WE CANNOT BUT REGARD THIS PROBLEM AS HAVING BEEN DELIBERATELY ENGINEERED BY THE US, AND BELIEVE THAT IT WILL INEVITABLY HAVE AN EXTREMELY UNFAVORABLE IMPACT ON US-PRC RELATIONS. THE US SIDE MUST BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES."

WE CATEGORICALLY REJECTED SHEN'S CHARGE THAT THE ATTACHMENT PROBLEM REPRESENTED A DELIBERATE USG ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE WITH THE NIXON TRIP. NOTHING, WE SAID, COULD BE FARTHER FROM THE TRUTH. IT WAS INCREDIBLE TO BELIEVE THAT THE US WOULD INVITE THIS SORT OF PROBLEM.

WE SAID AGAIN THAT IF THE FLIGHT WERE TO GO TO LOS ANGELES, WE WOULD AFFORD IT FULL ASSISTANCE AND SECURITY PROTECTION AND WOULD TRY TO REMOVE THE ATTACHMENT IF IT OCCURRED.

6. WE SUBSEQUENTLY LEARNED THAT MR. NIXON DISCUSSED MATTER TODAY WITH HAN HSU, WHO HAD FLOWN TO LOS ANGELES TO BE ON HAND FOR NIXON DEPARTURE, AND REAFFIRMED HIS DESIRE TO BOARD CHINESE AIRCRAFT IN TOKYO. HAN HSU STOOD FIRM, SAYING HE HAD HIS INSTRUCTIONS FROM PEKING, DESPITE MR. NIXON'S STATEMENT THAT ALL ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE FOR COMMERCIAL FLIGHT TO TOKYO. MR. NIXON THEN SENT A TELEGRAM TO PEKING, TO WHICH THERE HAS BEEN NO REPLY YET. MR. NIXON'S WASHINGTON LAWYER ALSO CONTACTED MONROE LEIGH LATE THIS AFTERNOON TO DETERMINE HOW GREAT THE ATTACHMENT RISK IS. LEIGH STRESSED THAT WE BELIEVE THE RISK IS SERIOUS.

7. ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME QUESTION ABOUT HOW FIRM THIS INFORMATION IS, THE SECRET SERVICE IN LOS ANGELES TOLD OUR LOCAL SY OFFICE THAT THEY HAVE A REPORT THAT THE WOMAN WHO SENT THE ATTACHMENT THREAT TO US IS ACTING ON BEHALF OF THE ROC AND PLANS TO GET A WRIT OF ATTACHMENT FROM A COUNTY COURT. AS OF 8:00 PM, WE DO NOT KNOW HOW THIS WILL TURN OUT, AND HAVE JUST HEARD THAT MR. NIXON ALSO DOES NOT KNOW WHAT CHINESE WILL DECIDE. WE ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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MAKING ALL NECESSARY PLANS IF THE PLANE COMES TO LOS ANGELES, INCLUDING STEPS TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF THE AIRCRAFT IF IT IS ATTACHED. WE ARE ALSO SENDING EA/PRCM DEPUTY DIRECTOR TO LOS ANGELES TONIGHT TO BE ON HAND IF PLANE GOES TO LOS ANGELES AND ATTACHMENT OCCURS.

8. COMMENT: THE CHINESE HAVE OBVIOUSLY HAD A GENUINE ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY STUBBORN AND COMPLETELY UNCOOPERATIVE. SHEN'S LANGUAGE THIS AFTERNOON WAS SHARPER THAN THE CHINESE USED ON SUCH PROBLEMS AS THE PERFORMING ARTS TROUPE CANCELLATION AND THE TIBET OFFICE ISSUE.

9. WE WILL LET YOU KNOW AS SOON AS THERE ARE FURTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS. INGERSOLL

UNQUOTE

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